

January 5, 2007

Dear Friend:

Yesterday, the new 110th Congress officially began. For the first time in U.S. history, we have a woman Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. I am proud to be a part of the new majority that plans to enact legislation to move America in a New Direction.

As I travel through the district, many hard-working New Mexico families have expressed their concern about special interests taking over the people's business in Washington. I promised to make ethics reform a priority and am proud that one of my first votes in the 110th Congress was to make this Congress the most ethical in history. It's long overdue that our families come first and special interests last.

In the first days, we passed new Rules for how the House operates, including ethics reform, fiscal responsibility and earmark reform. These Rules are a down payment to make the House the "Peoples' House" once again. Below is a description of some of the first issues that we considered this week.

- We banned gifts from lobbyists and the private organizations that employ them. To eliminate even the appearance of impropriety, gifts and meals from lobbyists and the organizations that employ them to Members of Congress or their staffs will be banned.
- We banned lobbyist-funded travel. Lobbyists and the organizations that employ them will be banned from planning, organizing, requesting, financing, arranging, or participating in travel for Members of Congress or their staffs.
- We banned the use of corporate jets. The use of official, personal or campaign funds to pay for the use of non-commercial, corporate planes will be prohibited.
- We shut down "Pay-to-Play" schemes like the "K Street Project." The "K Street Project," which amounted to a revolving door between Congress and lobbying firms, in which some members told corporations and lobbying firms whom they should hire in exchange for political access, will be prohibited.
- We ended arm twisting for votes. The past practice of holding votes open for undue amounts of time for the sole purpose of twisting arms and affecting the outcome of a vote will be banned. The 110th Congress won't see 3 hour votes like the appalling vote that allowed the prescription drug law to pass.
- We required fiscal and budgetary discipline and responsibility by reinstating "PAYGO" budget rules. New Mexico families have to live within their budget and make ends meet day in and day out, month after month. The Congress should have to do the same. Congress will adopt "pay-as-you-go" budget rules to stop any new deficit spending as the first step toward reversing record deficits mortgaging our children's future.

- We started earmark reform. Finally, there will be full disclosure of all earmarks, requiring Members to certify that earmarks provided would be for the public good — not financially benefiting themselves or their spouses.

These policy changes will restore integrity to Congress, put the federal government in a position to make fiscally responsible decisions and bring transparency to the earmark process. The new Congress had delivered on the promise of a New Direction that the voters demanded last November.

As you also may know, last month I was appointed as a new member of the Appropriations Committee. Yesterday, in addition to our official swearing in, I received my three new subcommittee assignments.

I am proud to tell you that in the 110th Congress, I will serve on the Interior and Environment subcommittee, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education subcommittee and the Legislative Branch subcommittee.

I look forward to the challenges of my new subcommittee assignments, through which I will continue to fight for our shared priorities, like assisting our veterans, improving access to health care, making education more affordable, and protecting our natural resources.

In the upcoming months there will be much more to come, and I look forward to keeping you informed on the issues. For more information on these or any federal issue, please visit my website at www.tomudall.house.gov.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress